

Missouri Military Preparedness and Enhancement Commission
Wednesday, July 16, 2008
GOB 500 Jefferson City, MO
www.mmpec.ded.mo.gov

Members in Attendance: Senator Frank Barnitz, Vice Chairman Representative David Pearce, Kent Thomas, Robert Welling, and Representative Terry Witte and Chairman Dalton Wright

Members Absent: Jeff Bloemker and Senator Bill Stouffer

Guests in Attendance: Dr. Margaret Anderson, Knob Noster Superintendent; Dr. Judene Blackburn, Superintendent Waynesville; Dana Cass, Knob Noster School Board; Robert Hagedorn, Congressman Ike Skelton's Office; Tanya Harencak, Whiteman Air Force Base Liaison; John Hayes, Knob Noster Assistant Superintendent; Pat Kerr, Missouri Veterans Commission; Shannon Koenig, Department of Higher Education; Andy Kohl, Warrensburg Assistant Superintendent; Maggie Martin, Fort Leonard Wood Liaison; Matt Michelson, Senator Stouffer's Office; Tom Quinn, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; Major General King Sidwell, Missouri National Guard; and Krista Zurkamer, Department of Economic Development

Chairman Dalton Wright called the MMPEC July 16, 2008 meeting to order at 10:34 a.m. Chairman Wright welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked all in attendance for their support.

The Commission members, supporting staff and guests made introductions.

The minutes from the April 2, 2008 meeting were introduced and reviewed. Chairman Wright called for additions and/or corrections to the minutes.

With no said corrections Chairman Wright asked for a motion to approve said minutes.

Kent Thomas moved, Robert Welling seconded the motion to accept the April 2, 2008 minutes. All approved, motion carried.

Legislative Recap-Vice Chairman Representative David Pearce, Representative Terry Witte and Senator Frank Barnitz

Vice Chairman Representative David Pearce thanked all in attendance at today's meeting and began to give a brief summary of HB 1678 which changes the laws regarding members of the military and their families. It was a good year in both the House and Senate and there was a pro-military climate in the legislation. Vice Chairman Representative Pearce thanked Representative Witte who was instrumental in getting our legislation passed and he also thanked their counterparts in the Senate, Senator Barnitz and Senator Stouffer. Representative Witte thanked Vice Chairman Representative Pearce for involving him from the beginning and was able to support it and get bipartisan

encouragement. He also added that special thanks need to go to Representative David Day for all of his dedication and work in getting HB 1678 passed. They proceeded by going over the different initiatives in HB1678 which include:

- Allows the Chairman of the Missouri Military Preparedness and Enhancement Commission as an ex officio member of the Missouri Veterans Commission and vice versa;
- Allows a military dependent who has completed an accredited prekindergarten program or completed or attended a kindergarten program in another state to enter kindergarten or first grade
- even if the child has not reached the required age for Missouri schools by August 1;
- Authorizes the State Board of Education to develop recommendations regarding alternate assessments for military dependents who relocate to Missouri during the school year;
- Authorizes Missouri to enter into the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children and establishes the Interstate Commission on Educational Opportunity for Military Children. The compact covers issues including facilitation of enrollment, both in classes and extracurricular activities; placement; graduation; and information-sharing.
- Requires the state board to establish rules to allow the issuance of a provisional teacher's certificate before the completion of a background check to the spouse of a military member who holds a teacher's certificate in another state that requires a background check and who has relocated within the last year;
- Allows school districts to accept a course in government completed in another state when a student transfers to a Missouri high school in ninth to twelfth grade to satisfy the state's graduation requirement;
- Allows the spouse and children of a soldier who after September 11, 2001, was killed or died of an illness while serving in action or became 80% disabled from an injury sustained in combat action and was a Missouri citizen at the time of enlistment and when the death or injury occurred to receive an educational grant for tuition at a public or private college or university in Missouri. The Coordinating Board of Higher Education within the Department of Higher Education will award up to 25 grants annually.
- Establishes the Missouri Returning Heroes' Education Act which requires all public higher education institutions which receive state funds appropriated by the General Assembly to limit the tuition charged to combat veterans for undergraduate studies to \$50 per credit hour.
- Specifies that a person's absence, relocation, or failure to comply with custody and visitation due to military service and out-of-state deployment, by itself, is not sufficient to justify a modification of a child custody or visitation order; and

- Renames the Guard at Home Program to the Hero at Home Program and expands the program to cover the first year after discharge from deployment, to cover reservists, and to cover situations in which an individual cannot return to his or her previous employment.

Major General King Sidwell expressed concern with the definition of soldiers with combat service and how do you document that. Whether it is through code of state regulation or through legislation and should the federal definition be considered.

The Commission continued to discuss this issue. Pat Kerr had informed the Commission that the Department of Higher Education is currently working on this and has set up some conference calls on this very topic. Ms. Kerr introduced Shannon Koenig and added that she will make sure that Major General Sidwell and the National Guard is plugged in and that the Commission may get updates if they like.

Chairman Wright added that it is important to get all parties together to hash out all the questions and concerns to ensure that no military members are missed. He added that they may want to form a Task Force of all interested parties to filter through all the different recommendations of everyone to administer the code of state regulations that will implement the statute.

Dr. Margaret Anderson added that many of the initiatives in the bill are items that Knob Noster is currently doing on their own and thanks the Commission for the support of this bill.

Chairman Wright added that the Commission held town hall meetings across the state gathering information and concerns from our military families. Out of those meetings many of these initiatives surfaced to which the Commission moved forward with.

Tom Quinn, with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, expressed some concern with the pre-accredited kindergarten aspect of the bill. He has concerns with someone of a young age applying for kindergarten class and has the completion of a Pre-K gifted alternative type program. Dr. Judene Blackburn added she had some concerns with the kindergarten entry age also and its ramifications. He asked if the members of general assembly received any feedback or guidance on what this type of scenario. He also asked if there were any problems that the Commission is aware of with the map testing and the children not going through to the next grade.

Kent Thomas replied much of the issues were relative to the completion of a course and it not being recognized and the student having to complete the course again in the new school. Vice Chairman Representative Pearce added that they hadn't received any feedback on the younger age entries to kindergarten. Discussion continued about the credit allowance of repeated course work.

The Commission also discussed graduation requirements like the constitution test and exiting exams when moving from one school to another. Robert Welling asked if

regulations were needed to enforce this element of the statute. Major General Sidwell stated that it may just be a policy guidance from the department. Mr. Quinn stated that it would be in the statute and not the rulemaking authority. He added that in the graduation requirement booklet there is some latitude to graduate children coming from another state.

Ms. Kerr asked if she could give the Missouri Veterans Report now since she will be needing to leave early today. Chairman Wright turned over the meeting to Ms. Kerr for the Missouri Veterans Commission meeting.

Missouri Veterans Commission Report, Pat Kerr

Ms. Kerr gave a brief summary of the Missouri Veterans Commission and the current stats of our veterans in Missouri and their support benefits. Through the Service to Veterans Program, counseling and assistance is available to thousands of veterans and their dependents throughout the state of Missouri. Currently there are approximately 543,000 veterans living in Missouri. Ms. Kerr discussed the veteran cemetery program with Missouri having four cemeteries soon to be five. The MVC Homes Program operates seven veterans' homes that provide long term skilled nursing care. The current occupancy rate is at 98%. The MVC also has the Power of 11¢ inspired by the generosity of a little boy which helps to raise funds for military family relief. The MVC also has a Women's Officer and Minority Officer providing outreach to our veterans in Missouri.

Operation Outreach is a program focused on the delivery of resources, financial and otherwise to the Global War on Terror (GWOT) service members, families and veterans. Staff works to keep GWOT service members, families and veterans up-to-date on ever evolving federal, state and local initiatives designed to make the transition back into communities and the home front as smooth as possible. Since 2004, Operation Outreach has resulted in over \$900,000 in financial resources to our GWOT service members, veterans and their families. Operation Outreach has helped over 736 new cases and 531,000 guard and reserve and active duty. The MVC does outreach through many avenues: inter-agency meetings, our service officers, regional areas, service centers, at deployments and upon returns. The program has also advocated for proper medical care for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and undiagnosed Traumatic Brain Injury which the Commission will hear more about later today.

Dr. Blackburn asked if there was a website address with all of this information on it, she would be happy to link MVC on their school district website. Ms. Kerr said thank you and she would be happy to get that information to her.

Major General Sidwell added that Congress has a \$1.4 billion dollar reintegration service program. There are events 30, 60, 90 day events and it was pioneered in Minnesota. In Missouri, there are two 45 day events and bring all the members together. They have a spouse day and offer day care service and provide education on the services and resources out there available to them.

Chairman Wright commended Major General Sidwell in what Missouri is doing in the integration piece of military life. Historically, this is an area that was lacking in the past and Missouri is doing a magnificent job. Major General Sidwell added that they have an event coming up in Branson. He also praised Congress for identifying a need in this area and the benefit for a program like this.

Vice Chairman Representative Pearce thanked all the individuals representing the respective education fields for their participation today. He added that he looks forward to what the initiatives in HB 1678 will bring. He offered the services and resources of the Commission as we move forward in implementing HB 1678.

Chairman Wright called for a lunch break at 11:56 a.m.

MMPEC meeting resumed at 12:46 p.m.

Adult Head Injury Program, Lori Brenneke

Lori Brenneke thanked the Commission for the opportunity today to share with them more about the Adult Head Injury (AHI) program in the state of Missouri. AHI provides assistance in locating, coordinating and purchasing rehabilitation and psychological services for individuals who have survived a traumatic brain injury (TBI). The Missouri Head Injury Advisory Council's mission is to lead in the development of a collaborative statewide system of prevention, public awareness, and provision of services and supports driven by the individuals with brain injury and their families. The department has created a great partnership with the Missouri Veterans Commission (MVC) in outreach to our effected military members suffering from AHI and TBI.

To be eligible to participant in the program one must be a Missouri resident, is age twenty-one to sixty-five and meet medical eligibility guidelines. The AHI program provides services of two types: service coordination and rehabilitation services. Service coordination includes evaluation and assessment of needs, information and education; development, regular evaluation and updates of a service plan; and assistance in locating and accessing medical care, housing, counseling, transportation, rehabilitation, vocational training, and cognitive/behavior training. Service Coordination is provided to all AHI program participants, regardless of financial status. There are ten service coordination areas in the state serving the special health care needs of Missouri.

Rehabilitation services are available to individuals who are eligible for the AHI program, and whose income is at or below 185% of Federal Poverty guidelines. Rehabilitation services are provided to eligible clients when necessary to facilitate the client's achievement of a long-term goal as indicated in the SHCN Service Plan. The Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) is payer of last resort. Rehabilitation includes neuropsychological evaluation and consultation; behavioral assessment and consultation; adjustment counseling; transitional home and community support; pre-vocational/pre-

employment training; supported employment/follow along; special instruction; socialization skills training; and transportation.

Collaborative Efforts With the MVC.....

- DHSS providing TBI materials for Pre-Deployment & Post-Deployment Briefings conducted by Operation Outreach
- DHSS providing TBI materials for Support Your Troops Events (10 events, 400-4800 in attendance at each event) sponsored by Operation Outreach
- DHSS Outreach (10 Community Health Center visits, Press release resulting in 8 radio interviews and 1 TV Talk Show) to include information on military risk of TBI
- DHSS TBI Action Plan Development: Operation Outreach participation and information on military/TBI in State TBI Action Plan booklet
- Operation Outreach attendance at Missouri Head Injury Advisory Council Meetings when possible
- Intersection Meeting hosted by MVC resulted in: Special Health Care Needs Service Coordinator Assessment additions, Collaboration between DHSS, Office of Minority and Women's Health with the Veteran's Women and Minority Programs
- Multiple meetings to share resources and information between DHSS Adult Head Injury Program Service Coordinators and the MVC Benefits Specialists and Outreach Specialists

Getting Collaboration Started...

- Search for a contact (list available)
- Start by sharing information about what each agency does – identify common goals
- Collaboration does not have to involve money
- Don't give up!

The Commission discussed the age requirements of the program set at twenty-one. Many of our military are enlisting out of high school and going over seas fighting the war and returning with brain injuries and not being able to participate in the program due to their age. Also, the commission discussed the difficulties in identifying brain injuries upon the return of our military men and women. The Commission also discussed DHSS actively working together with the hospitals at Whiteman and Fort Leonard Wood in possibly identifying some of the brain injury cases.

The Commission reviewed last years Annual Report to prepare for their 2008 report. The Commission was in agreement that Krista Zurkammer would go through last years report and include all the elements accomplished in the legacy for 2008. The Commission also decided that the Department of Defense impact information that MERIC had completed for the Commission last year would be included in this year's report. The Commission

was in agreement to set up a conference call to go through the draft of the annual report. Ms. Zurkamer would email out some possible dates and the draft report to be discussed.

Tanya Harencak asked the superintendents present, Mr. Quinn and Major General Sidwell their opinion and experience on the excused absence attendance policy in their respective areas. She added that she is aware of a school district in her area that is considering a five day excused absent policy in their schools. This imposes some problems for many of the military families in her area. The five day may be too tight of a restriction for some families. Many of our students are having reintegration time with their parents upon their return from war and those days added to regular excused absents may be pushing the envelope. If the student has more than the five excused absences during the semester the student would have to repeat. Most all of our students are good students.

Mr. Quinn stated that schools have a 95% attendance threshold that needs to be met. So some schools may consider a five day excused absence policy. Currently, most schools I believe are administering an eight day policy. The amount of days excused is a school board discretion. Dr. Blackburn added that they issue an eight day excused absence policy and in some instances they have allowed some discretion. In many cases military student dependents take their work with them ahead of time. The transfer of the students affects attendance also.

Ms. Harencak added that this five day came by to a surprise to many in her community and could have a definite affect on their military dependents. There are great concerns that some of our children will have to repeat a semester due to the extra absences. She asked if it is possible for absences to be based on the child's school performance indicators and not attendance policy.

Major General Sidwell added that making some exceptions for children of parents of the military and allowing them time for re-integration may be something that the department should consider. Mr. Welling added that in the Interstate Compact it gives the Superintendent the right to use discretion in absences when dealing with deployments and re-integration.

Mr. Quinn added that it should be a consideration. Mr. Welling asked if the superintendent had the authority to waive the five day restriction action by the school board. Major General Sidwell added that there needs to be some kind of exercise of discretion.

Mr. Quinn suggested that Ms. Harencak's community voice their concerns with the school district, on the grass roots level and see if change in the policy is possible. Major General Sidwell suggested members of the community write congressional letters in complaint. Mr. Quinn added that a letter from the Commission may be a good suggestion also. The Commission was in agreement, Chairman Wright asked Ms. Zurkamer to prepare such memo for him to review that would be sent out to all school districts affected by military dependents voicing their concerns.

Chairman Wright reminded everyone that our next meeting will be on October 15, 2008 at Whiteman Air Force Base and details will follow. Chairman Wright thanked the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; Department of Higher Education; and the school districts from Knob Noster, Warrensburg and Waynesville for their attendance and participation in today's meeting.

With no further business Chairman Dalton Wright adjourned the meeting at 2:53pm.

Minutes Approved:

Date